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Book

# AMERICA PAST AND PRESENT

OR

SIMPLE AND STRENUOUS LIFE.

## MANHATTAN - NEW YORK



BY

PROF. E. COULON *de* JUMONVILLE.

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“You probably know that I do not  
care very much for the coward  
or the moral weakling.”

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT, NOV. 20.

“There is no occasion to despair  
for the future of the Church in  
France or the French nation.”

ARCHBISHOP IRELAND, NOV. 20.

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## SIMPLE AND STRENUOUS LIFE.

It is not given everybody to recall the '50's; and, gentle reader, it is with as much reverence and pleasure for the past that I can retrace my steps and tell what I saw, felt and experienced.

Imagine to yourself that in this age of wonderful activity and kaleidoscopic changes advancing civilization is rooting out every vestige of what was so dear to our land, fathers, ideas and habits. We have stripped the old man and become a great nation whose voice may be heard in the concert of the most advanced and powerful nations of the earth.

It would not be amiss to speak of America as it was, and of America as it is at the present day.

In the earlier times there were no such men as politicians, carpetbaggers, lobbyist and millionaires; the latter could be found only in Brazil, Cuba or Spain.

American ambition was limited to her own shores, to develop the vast inland resources of this western world that required more arms than brains to unearth them.

In those days of "Auld Lang Syne," the recollection of the struggles for freedom and liberty were then vivid and prominent to such a degree that militarism was considered a useless, hurtful dangerous old worn out European institution that could have no chance of ever being grafted into the American.

It was the promised-land, the Eden for the hard pressed and dependent European, where he was received with open arms.

Immigration then was encouraged, even courted to the utmost; and it soon filled the vast regions of this continent with

a continuous flow of people glad to escape the military duties that were imposed upon them.

The dislike for anything military was carried so far that almost as a boy just leaving a European school where a uniform was not only the craze and fashion, but a fad, a necessity to impress the young generation with a martial spirit, I had to experience the aversion that was then alive among young Americans who naturally reflected their parents' ideas.

Dressed in a would be military costume, now so dear to American youths and college boys, I became on my arrival at New York, the cynosure of crowds, and I was happy to escape the jeers, and, as it were, the deprecating stare that followed me until I had disappeared from the public gaze, with a tacit resolution never again to don that uniform of mine.

Alas! what a change! How welcome that same tunic would be now, and what a strong personality and distinction would it not give me, if I could revert to years past when I looked so young and so martial.

The manners of the people were also different in many respects: a greater cordiality to and regard for foreigners, especially for the French who were remembered as the staunch, firm and independent friends and allies of those who had shed their best blood for the liberties of this country.

Home life was also spent in one's own cottage; hotels and flats were the exception; the latter custom so prevalent among Parisians. Houses and lots could be had for little money, and family ties, marital life were also more closely, more firmly bound together.

There was the common sense and simplicity of dress and cordiality of manners that worked like a charm, giving Europeans a lofty opinion of that pure life that rocked or began the American Republic.

Nowadays, allmighty dollar has put its heavy iron hand upon everything and everybody; and the struggle for dear life has become here as bitter and as hard as it was in the old continent.

America, while enlarging her sphere of action, seems to



recede from the old standpoint of offering everyone a chance to feel at home or bettering his condition. Immigration is no longer looked upon as a boon, but rather as a burden, a necessary evil that endangers a good fellowship among foreign and home laborers.

Riots, strikes are in the air and have at times caused mortal strife when the lowering of wages was the upshot of general competition.

The legitimate political and national influence of America remains whole and even greater by the institutions and constitution that framed the country, rather than by her naval or military achievements; in so much the more as Europeans are fully imbued with the idea that America is "par excellence the land for the brave and the free;" and no sane foreign government would ever attempt to excite their people into an estrangement with this Republic; she has nothing whatever to fear from foreign aggression or interference.

The immense, stupendous accumulation of wealth may later on threaten the very fundamental, social or even political liberties of the nation. Rome and Greece never enjoyed more liberty and happiness than when the sturdy and simple manners of their people were predominant; and they never fell so low and with such a crash than after they had been loaded with riches and military glory.

"Chi va piano va sano" the Italians say; and if we prejudge the ambitious strides of Americans with their quick luncheons that cause so much dyspepsia, in the same strain it may be said that anemia must eventually follow the feverish activity which reminds one of the lazy man who became laborious in order to later on enjoy a complete rest, "a far niente" so dear to those French shopkeepers whose ambition is to retire from business after ten or twelve years of incessant, tireless industry, in which wives and husbands take an equal share, in order to become rentiers or people of leisure.

But, what's the use of clamoring, some would say, about what people know so well?

Verily, verily I say unto you, time, experience and his-

tory are witness; and since repetition, as the Germans say, is the Mother of Knowledge, "*Wiederholung ist die Mutter der Wissenschaft*," it is always useful to be reminded that the Italian motto remains true at all times, "*Chi va piano va sano*."

Yet, and so far, has that great development of riches benefited only a small minority, and the working classes of America fare no better, after all, than have the European ones; indeed, it might be added with a certainty that the American working-man with his dollar or two a day has a lesser show to get a quiet, independent old age than as is the case in France and likely in Germany, where employes and employers are bound by statute or law, to lay by a certain portion of the monies paid and received, to secure a pension sufficient to enable the worn out old man to end his life in peace and security.

This wonderful, mighty activity of American cities has developed into sky scrapers which, if not models of elegance, are undoubtedly of comfort, solidity, clever engineering and financial success, since a small plot of land can bring from its high building a rental that a dozen ordinary ones could hardly dream of giving.

But there again, if that is the end for which they were built, it must be said that owing to their colossal proportions they give the surrounding houses a poor, a lilliputian appearance, which is far from being attractive or prepossessing.

This leads me to speak a few words about the Statue of Liberty that adorns the Harbor at New York, but which decorous as it is, sadly lacks in facilities to ascend its enormous height through the winding staircases that are no better lighted than many streets, or know which car to take when no translucent indicator shows at night, and on Broadway which is which, and where it goes or comes from.

Thus are reforms to be hoped for, if they are spoken of or written about; and this, gentle reader, is what I have tried to do for the welfare of the public in general and the good name of the United States of America.

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## NEW YORK - MANHATTAN

as pictured in 1900.

New York, empire and gigantic city,  
Seated thou art in splendor and beauty;  
Thy name, a name for greatness and riches  
Hath won thee fame that far out reaches.  
Thou art a living proof of what freedom  
Is capable of bringing to her bosom.  
That greatness and power thou hast attained,  
France is the more proud, for she was ordained  
To aid in its birth thy nation new  
To which ev'ry lover of freedom flew.

Thy port open'd to the weary travelers,  
Who from European yoke and jailors  
Escap'd the chains in which they were detained.  
As the timid dove is often retained  
In the murd'rous talons of the vulture  
That would prey on her and seize to torture.  
Manhattan, thy name so before it was,  
Should indeed have remained, for York has  
Recall'd thine dependence and obedience  
To England that would force thine allegiance.

Thy statue  
Of Liberty that rises in full view,  
Is the gift of a nation whose scion  
Was the friend of immortal Washington,  
The son and the hero of thy land  
That rebell'd against unjust England.  
It was enough, indeed, thou didst retain  
That language that for thee was then a stain;  
But the pure minded Puritan pioneers  
Soon replaced the dishonest bucanears,  
For the Pilgrim Fathers left their birth-place  
To worship in their tongue God face to face.

Thus, with almost more than a prodigy  
 Hast thou become by thine own energy,  
 The rival of the proudest of cities  
 That adorn the old world's older counties.  
 What a bustle, what a stir, what a country !  
 What hath enabl'd thee by sheet industry  
 To enlarge man's power and usefulness,  
 Develop his genius and thy richness,  
 And open thy arms to ev'ry nation  
 Of every creed, clime and condition?

Thy wire and suspended Brooklyn bridge—  
 A marvel ! thy sky-scrapers?—Thy bridge;  
 Thy electric and elevated tramways  
 That relieve the horse in so many ways;  
 Thy Colleges and millionaires' mansions  
 Are so many samples and so many reasons  
 Why Europe should look with attention  
 To America's strides and ambition;  
 For, Europe with her size and population  
 May be threatened, such is my notion,  
 To see her products and trade limited  
 Before two hundred years have existed.

If Columbus hath added a new sphere,  
 Steam and electricity without fear,  
 Have safely brought all distances to naught  
 Now, electricity travels like thought,  
 Brings people into closer proximity,  
 With less prejudice and more amity  
 Matchless in beauty, elegance and grace  
 Are thy daughters in manners and face;  
 And education for which thou spend'st millions,  
 Insures thy people against all rebellions.

Boston, the Athens of this Republic,  
Standing high in favor with the public,  
Shares with her diversified attainments  
The laurels of the Old World's achievements.  
Soon will Pupin with Mars' inhabitants  
Converse as he doth with two continents;  
Back'd by Edison will Deloncle behold  
Peaceful Mars alive with people young and old.  
Hence, New Yorkers, accept this compliment  
Sans flattery, as my true sentiment.







November 22. 1902.

COULON.

"Although Prof. Emile Conlon de Jumonville is not a musician, we do not hesitate to recommend him to our numerous readers, on account of his literary contributions in French and in English, some of which were reproduced in the *AMERICAN ART JOURNAL*, when we were struck by his American and French temper, with his strong feelings of horror at the atrocious and untimely end of our regretted great citizen, William McKinley, which were so brilliantly rendered in English verse by our friend Ingersoll Lockwood.

His poetical admiration of Manhattan, so minutely described, his contribution in favor of the Martinique sufferers, his laudation of President Roosevelt's call upon the well-known generosity of the nation, and also his tribute to his countrywoman, Sarah Bernhardt, are all a claim to our notice of him. Besides, the professor is the author of a French grammar, of several pamphlets, and even of a novel recalling Guatemala's former volcanic eruption, which he embellished with a romance, yet unpublished, but which we have read with a real satisfaction. Shall we add his former contribution upon "The Dreyfus Case", his "America past and present", and "Letters to a friend in Paris" and many other articles that have appeared in divers papers of the Union.

His experience as a teacher of languages and especially of his own, commend him to our artists and the literati in his profession that had made of him a favorite among Canadians, Californians and Parisians, and which should ensure him a like preference among the refined and educated New Yorkers."

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M. J. Lusk President Roosevelt

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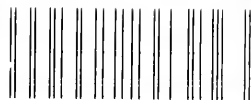
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